



## **NEWS FROM NOAA**

**NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

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### **NOAA BEGINS LOUISIANA COASTAL WETLANDS RESTORATION PROJECT**

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Restoration Center and Louisiana Department of Natural Resources have awarded a \$17.7 million wetlands restoration contract that will protect and create 1,400 acres of wetlands in Lafourche Parish, Louisiana.

The project, awarded to Pine Bluff Sand and Gravel Company of Pine Bluff, Arkansas, is located in an area that protects approximately 3,000 acres of fragile interior marshes between the Little Lake shoreline and Bayou L'Ours Ridge. The Little Lake Shoreline Protection/Dedicated Dredging Project is an area of considerable wetland loss which was caused by shoreline erosion, subsidence, and channel construction.

"This project marks one of the largest marsh creation projects in the nation," said retired Navy Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Ph.D., under secretary of commerce for oceans and atmosphere and NOAA administrator. "This project, and others like it are a key component in protecting natural resources in Louisiana as well as providing defense against hurricanes. It is exciting to see coastal restoration of this magnitude happening so soon after the impact from last year's hurricanes."

NOAA Fisheries Service habitat specialists, working through the NOAA Restoration Center, coordinate the planning, construction and monitoring of wetlands projects such as the Little Lake/Round Lake Project as part of the Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act, commonly known as the Breau Act. In addition to the importance to wildlife habitat, wetlands and coastal marshes provide an indispensable buffer for populated areas against the impacts of coastal storms and hurricanes. The 2005 hurricane season underscored this fact.

"This partnership with NOAA allows the state to restore some vital marshland in Lafourche parish," said Scott A. Angelle, secretary of the Louisiana Department of Natural Resources. "The project will put nutrient-rich dredged material into an area that has been deprived and degraded over the years."

The Little Lake/Round Lake Project is designed to prevent erosion along roughly five miles of Little Lake shoreline; create 490 acres of inter-tidal wetlands along the Little Lake shoreline; and nourish 530 acres of intermediate marsh. The project is key to the restoration and protection of coastal Louisiana, its communities and its natural resources. The project is scheduled for completion as early as winter 2006.

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The Coastal Wetlands Planning, Protection and Restoration Act funds habitat restoration programs on an 85 percent - 15 percent cost sharing with the state of Louisiana. Five federal agencies and the state comprise the CWPPRA team working to reverse the loss of approximately 25 square miles of wetlands per year in Louisiana.

Cooperative wetlands rebuilding projects under CWPPRA are implemented through agreements between the federal agency sponsors and the Louisiana DNR. Projects are selected and managed by the Louisiana Coastal Wetlands Conservation and Restoration Task Force, as established by CWPPRA. The Task Force is a partnership among the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Department of Commerce's NOAA Fisheries Service, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of the Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Louisiana Governor's Office.

NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitats through scientific research, management and enforcement. NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS), NOAA is working with its federal partners and 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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On the Web:

NOAA: <http://www.noaa.gov>

NOAA Fisheries Service: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov>